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## The Lie Detector in Limbo

**T**he dream of the Reagan administration was to have everyone in the government take a lie-detector test. The president felt the lie detector was the only way to keep public servants from leaking the government's secrets to the press. It also put the fear of God in those who weren't following the White House game plan.

Alas, the lie detector has fallen on hard times. Since Irangate, all the machines have been recalled because they are giving out false signals.

The retired detectors are being collected in a warehouse in Alexandria, where they are guarded by Victor Veracity, who is the deputy director of the U.S. Department of Truth and Consequences.

"Why," I asked, "have you recalled so many detectors?"

Victor replied, "They reported everyone attached to Irangate is lying. We know for a fact that the people who were involved don't lie, so it must mean the machines are faulty."

"How could the lie detectors have gone so far off?"

"Every time we strapped up one of the major players in the Iran affair, he blew out every fuse in the Senate hearing room. Since the president's men are all Boy Scouts, we had to assume the glitch was in the detector. Let me show you what is going on. I will ask this lie detector a question. 'When did you know we were selling arms and not Bibles to Iran?' Now I will respond to the question with an answer. 'Only after the Ayatollah Khomeini told me about it in a Tel Aviv discotheque.' Do you see where the needle went? Right off the board."

"And the machine wasn't even plugged in," I said.

"That's why we've recalled all the detectors. You can't trust them."

"What are you going to do now that you've brought the detectors back?"

"We've established a course in remedial truth. It helps people involved in Irangate to realize they have options. They can tell the truth, they can stick with their stories or they can choose the boring way out by taking the Fifth Amendment."

"I didn't know with the budget cuts the government could afford a remedial truth course."

"We established it for people who are up to their hips in Iran and contra operations, but are also interested in protecting the president."

"Can the lie-detecting machines distinguish between those who are team players and those who are just interested in telling the truth to save the country?"

"We're very suspicious of people who use lie detectors to save the country."

"Even the CIA can't be trusted."

Victor showed me a copy of The Washington Post. "Look at this. The CIA is reexamining whether the agency's covert operations in Nicaragua violated congressional bans against giving the contras military aid. This part may interest you. The first thing the new acting director of the CIA, Robert M. Gates, did was rule that since so many agents may have given questionable testimony regarding contra operations everyone can testify over again and change his testimony."

"Are we to assume that because of Irangate the lie detector is no longer held in as high repute as it was before?"

"The White House has only one goal in all these Iran-contra hearings."

"Which is?"

"To see that everyone involved in this dreadful mistake can once again look at himself in the mirror and not be ashamed."

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